

# **New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Evaluation Report**

## **STRAFFORD LEARNING CENTER**

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**Final Report  
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**Evaluation Conducted on  
Date March 30 and 31, 1999**

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# **New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Evaluation Report**

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*Note: It should be noted that suggestions are not considered corrective actions and therefore are given as technical assistance. The private facility is not mandated to implement them.*

# **New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Summary Evaluation Report**

## **Strafford Learning Center**

### **I. INTRODUCTION:**

A New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval visit was conducted at Strafford Learning Center. The external team met on March 30-31, 1999 in order to review the status of Special Education services Strafford Learning Center is providing to eligible students.

Activities related to this evaluation included the close review of all the application materials submitted by the school and a check of teaching certifications of special education personnel. In addition, interviews were held with the education coordinator, special education teachers, regular education teachers, counselors, parents and related service personnel as availability permitted. The team also randomly inspected and reviewed student files from the school, including the file of a student who falls under the James O' Consent Decree. Throughout the visit, the team had full cooperation from the school personnel, which was greatly appreciated.

The report that you are about to read represents the consensus of all the members of the visiting team. Please keep in mind that this is a "report for exception", meaning that only exceptions to the N.H. State Standards have been addressed. If a component is not mentioned, that does not mean that the team did not review it; it just means that there were no exceptions to the Standards found in that particular area.

### **II. STATUS OF PREVIOUS ON-SITE: April 1 and 2, 1993**

A review of the previous program approval report finds that the Program Directors and staff at Strafford Learning Center have worked hard to correct previous areas of non-compliance.

In the area of staff certification, all staff are presently appropriately certified or are participating in an alternative program to seek certification. (A single exception is the MSW staff member who will receive licensure pending completion of supervision hours.)

The issues related to the program's previous space needs have been addressed in each case. The Strafford Learning Center has constructed a building that presently houses the TAC programs. The new classroom space is located adjacent to the administrative offices in Somersworth. Presently, there are plans to expand this facility. As the student population has grown and the program continues to expand, an addition should provide for adequate space for the delivery of instructional and related services.

### **III. ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

The visiting team was very favorably impressed with the quality of the overall programming offered by the Strafford Learning Center. The high standard for professionalism and related skills among the Strafford Learning Center's staff was clear and impressive. There was an atmosphere of enthusiasm and high interest in each program setting. Communication among staff is well established and results in a common language and understanding of program goals. Students observed were engaged in their learning and the classrooms were pleasant and conducive to instruction.

A review of student records shows a system of good organization with only a few procedural oversights. The staff appear to have a good sense of the process; participating in the development of IEP's and regularly reporting on student progress. Previous certification issues for staff have been resolved and all present staff are either currently certified or are participating in alternative NH certification programs.

The Strafford Learning Center's administration has continued to work hard to meet the needs of area school districts in offering specialized programming for low incidence populations. They are commended for the positive relationships evident with sending school district staff. Another noteworthy component of the Strafford Learning Center's services is the diagnostic team approach available to pre-school students. This comprehensive diagnostic prescriptive model used to identify learning patterns and to create relevant educational and behavioral plans, is an outstanding model that the administration may wish to consider expanding.

The visiting team observed the need for long range planning, particularly in the TAC program, as growth continues. The physical space in the modular classrooms for TAC and TIP is presently adequate (an addition is planned for the TAC modular.) However, the PEP-64 Program space felt isolated and the main classroom did not lend itself well to spaces that could be used for a range of instructional or therapeutic activities. The TIP program appears to be operating close to maximum capacity and if an increase in student numbers is planned, additional space would be warranted. Beyond any space considerations, the team felt that a long-range plan related to programming needs and goals would be of benefit to the organization. There appears to be a growing need for the development of specialized programming and Strafford Learning Center has a well established reputation for offering a variety of programs. However, the team recommends that time be spent on creating a collective vision that may take into account plans for the next three to five years.

Finally, the team recognized that the Strafford Learning Center's programs are separate programs and that they serve students who are unable to participate fully in the general education classroom. However, there appears to be relatively little opportunity for the TAC students to interact with non-disabled peers. The students may benefit from an increase in community experiences or in other situations where they can practice their newly emerging social and behavioral skills. The emphasis on transition planning may help further identify areas where students can gradually increase their time in inclusionary settings.

#### **IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:**

**PROGRAM:** PEP (Preschool Education Program) 64  
Milton & Wakefield

##### **COMMENDATIONS:**

- The PEP staff are professional, enthusiastic and committed to the program.
- There is a high level of teamwork evident between teachers, specialists and paraprofessionals.
- The addition of ASL (American Sign Language) throughout the program by staff and students is an enriching and positive component.
- Parents interviewed report that communication between program and home is very good.
- The integrated team model is very positive, as is the availability of psychological consultation to the pre-school program.
- The administrative support to the program is very good.

##### **CITATIONS:** (in numerical order)

Ed#1109.01 1 file: The IEP does not include individuals or service providers responsible for implementation.

Ed#1109.03 1 file: The IEP development team did not appear to be complete.

Ed#1109.06 1 file: It is unclear if a representative from the private facility participated in the IEP development.

##### **SUGGESTIONS:**

- In the records reviewed, the IEP's and SPEDIS information was not legible. It is suggested that clear copies be made at the time of the meeting. The program may need a better quality photocopier to accomplish this task.
- The program appears to need more physical space to accommodate the variety of related service providers.
- Opportunities to increase interaction time with typical peers might be beneficial.
- Clearer documentation of the transition from preschool to kindergarten programs is needed in an effort to document the team's work for the benefit of future providers.

#### **IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:**

**PROGRAM:** PEP (Preschool Education Program) 5  
Lee, Durham & Madbury

##### **COMMENDATIONS:**

- The PEP staff are professional, enthusiastic and committed to the program.
- There is a high level of teamwork evident between teachers, specialists and paraprofessionals.
- There is good communication between school and home.
- The integrated team model is highly effective and good use of consultation is commended.
- There is good administrative support available to the program staff.
- The PEP 5 program is commended for the successful relationship established within the Mast Way School.

##### **CITATIONS:** (in numerical order)

Ed#1107.06 1 file: The written evaluation summary report is missing.

##### **SUGGESTIONS:**

- There is no clear transition plan format evident for students who are transitioning from pre-school programming to the kindergarten. The program staff do provide a substantial amount of support to students, parents and receiving staff throughout the transition period, but there is little documentation of the process.

#### **IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:**

**PROGRAM:** TIP (Teaching Independence Program)  
Nute Middle/High School, Milton NH

#### **COMENDATIONS:**

- The staff is to be commended for their excellent relationship with the Nute High School staff and for the results seen in integration opportunities for TIP students.
- The TIP staff are very professional, work well together and have a clear and effective communication system in place.
- TIP staff make excellent use of the Nute High School resources.
- Materials and equipment are appropriate and available for curriculum implementation in the TIP program.
- Technology appears to be an integral part of the TIP curriculum
- The staff continue to work toward the development of relevant curriculum for TIP students. The health curriculum, including sex education, is particularly well designed.
- There is a sense of coordination among all staff, including related service providers, ensuring an integration of instructional offerings.

#### **CITATIONS:** (in numerical order)

Ed#1109.03 (a and d) 1 file: IEP development team did not include a regular education teacher.

Ed#1133.11 The TIP program includes students from age 12 through 21, thus exceeding the four year age span. The TIP program should either request separate program numbers or seek an exception for each student whose age exceeds the four year age range.

#### **SUGGESTIONS:**

- The TIP program is located in a building, adjacent to Nute High School. Space appears adequate to meet most educational programming needs, however, staff do not have a private space for communication purposes (phone calling, conferencing, planning, evaluation reviews, etc.) The visiting team suggests that some accommodation be made to allow for confidential conversations.
- The visiting team suggests that transition planning for students, beginning at age fourteen, become a regular part of the educational planning and programming for the TIP students.
- The support offered to TIP students for related services could be increased to provide more time for teaming and direct service.

#### **IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:**

**PROGRAM:** TAC (Transitional Adjustment Class)  
315 Main St., Somersworth NH

##### **COMENDATIONS:**

- The TAC staff are professional and supportive of each other. There is evidence of clear team work and good, consistent communication.
- The behavior management system is run in a very organized and consistent manner. Students get the same messages about behavior throughout the system.
- Data related to the behavior management system is used to modify programs.
- The focus in the program is clearly helping students to change behaviors.
- Students receive continuous positive reinforcement, continuous crisis intervention, and counseling.
- There is good leadership evident with clear lines of communication, throughout the TAC program.

##### **CITATIONS:** (in numerical order)

Ed#1107.06 3 files: Records did not contain a copy of the current SEE/PT Evaluation Written Summary.

Ed#1109.01(l) 1 file: The IEP did not contain a statement of transportation and other related service.

Ed#1109.01(g) 1 file: IEP projected dates and duration of services was missing.

Ed#1107.08 1 file: There was no documentation of observation for LD student.

Ed#1123.05 1 file: There was no evidence of Parent Notification of Rights

##### **SUGGESTIONS:**

- The time-out area should be reorganized to allow for separate areas for different developmental age groups. The present open space could be made more private; it appears to be a stimulating area.
- The isolation room appears small. Supervision should be provided at all times, when a student is placed in the room.



#### **IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:**

**PROGRAM:** TAC, Continued

- The academic offerings at the high school level should be more clearly linked to a consultant relationship with content area certified staff. The TAC staff should consider more varied methods for delivery of instruction in an effort to create a more diversified curriculum, including a clearly defined physical education program.
- The School to Work program could be expanded at the high school level. Opportunities for students to have community related experiences could provide a more varied day.
- Continue work toward increased access to technology for TAC students. Establishing Internet access would help extend the library/media resources that are presently lacking.
- The TAC staff could consider a long-range plan that would address not only space issues, but also curriculum design, implications of future expansions and create clear overall program goals.
- The TAC staff, in conjunction with sending district staff, should continue to work toward developing relevant and useful transition plans for students age 14 and over.

# **ADDENDUM**

## **JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM**

### **STRAFFORD LEARNING CENTER**

**Student File Review**

**Case Study Document**

**Reimbursement Claim Form**

**Case Study Addendum Form**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>ADDENDUM</b> <b>JAMES O. MONITORING PROGRAM</b></p>
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**STRAFFORD LEARNING CENTER**

**CITATIONS:**

Ed#1107.06 (a )                      2 files: Evaluation summaries are not included in records.

Ed#1111.01 (e)(l)                      1 file: ESY process was not completed by 4/30 or 60 days prior to starting.

**SUGGESTIONS:**

- There was no evidence of transition planning in either of the two files reviewed. The revised IDEA regulations now require that transition planning begin by age 14. It is suggested that the Strafford Learning Center work closely with sending districts to begin creating relevant transition plans for all students age 14 and over.